

JONAH

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Jonah chapter 1 as we continue our study through the Word of God. Make no mistake about it, this book is very controversial. And the reason I say that is because what Jonah goes through, being swallowed up by a great fish. They see that as foolishness and it could never happen.

The problem with that kind of logic is that they have factored God out of the picture. God can do that, He created the heavens and the earth so using a great fish like a submarine is not a big deal for Him.

Secondly, Jesus verified not only that Jonah was a prophet but He linked what happened to Jonah to what He was going to do. Let me show you what I mean. In Matthew 12:40 we are told, **“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”**

Now many will ignore this or think this is not a big deal, but it is. Jesus is saying that just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale or great fish He will be three days and three nights in the belly of the earth. He is speaking of His death, burial and resurrection! Thus, if this story is not true of Jonah then the story of Jesus’s death, burial and resurrection must not be true either!

But the story of Jonah is true as Jesus said in Matthew 16:4, “**A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet *Jonah*.**” Did you see what Jesus called Jonah, a prophet! So if Jesus says the story of Jonah is absolutely true, that it is not just symbolic of something else, who am I to argue with Him. That would be foolish! And we will look at that as we get to that portion of Jonah and you will see that this has happened to others, so it is very possible!

As you will see, Jonah is not going to be very happy with the mission God has him on and because of that he tries to move in the opposite direction. But if you are disobeying God you are moving away from Him and instead of going up, you will be going down and we will see that with Jonah. Let me share this story with you and then I will expound on it, you will see what I mean. We are told,

Years ago an old Scottish woman went to country homes to sell thread, buttons and shoe strings. When she came to an unmarked crossroad, she would toss a stick in the air and go whichever way the stick pointed.

One day she was seen tossing the stick into the air several times. “Why do you toss the stick several times?” Someone asked. She answered, “It has pointed every time to the road going to the right and I want to go on the road to the left. It looks smoother!” She kept throwing up the stick until it finally pointed toward the road she wanted to go.

- Walter B. Knight

Like this woman and like Jonah, that is our response many times. We don't like what God wants us to do so we try to go in another direction, we try to run away and it doesn't work. What ends up happening is we are back at the place that God wants us in the first place! Thus, listen to God and walk accordingly!

One more point here and that is the archeological evidence regarding Jonah and what happened to him. Listen to what James Montgomery Boice wrote regarding Jonah,

In addition to the data on whales, there are a number of links between the prophet Jonah and Nineveh that are also supportive of the Old Testament story. A few of these are cited by Gaebelein. First there is a seal belonging to the reign of Amasis II of Egypt (570–526 b.c.) that shows with remarkable clarity a man emerging from a sea monster. This seal is cited by an archaeologist named Knight in a volume entitled Nile and the Jordan, published in 1921. The figure has been identified as Jonah. A second interesting bit of information is the name of the mound in the upper Tigris valley under which the remains of ancient Nineveh were discovered. The site of Nineveh had long been lost. But the mound had been called “Neby Yunas” (“The Prophet Jonah”) for centuries.

- James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 229

With that as our background let's begin reading in Jonah chapter 1 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word this evening.

JONAH 1

VERSES 1-2

1. First of all let's talk about this man named Jonah and when he ministered and where he ministered. According to II Kings 14:25 we are told that Jonah was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the King in Israel at that time was Jeroboam II who reigned from around 793 B. C. to 753 B. C.

Thus, Jonah's ministry was during that period of time and many feel that the writing of Jonah took place about 760 B. C. Also, Jonah was from the city of Gath-Hepher, about 3 miles north of Nazareth in the lower Galilee region, in the tribe of Zebulun, which, of course, was in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

2. His name, "Jonah" means "Dove" and that is interesting because he acted more like a hawk looking for the destruction of Nineveh than for its deliverance!

God calls Jonah to go to this place called Nineveh and the reason is because **... their wickedness has come up before Me.** God is aware of all that is going on and before He brings His judgment upon a nation He is going to warn them and that is what we see here!

Keep in mind that Nineveh is some 550 miles away and was located on the eastern side of the Tigris River. The capital of Assyria was Nineveh and it was a powerful and spectacular city at one time. It had 1,200 towers on its walls that extended two-hundred feet high and the wall itself around the city was one-hundred-feet high.

The city itself was 60 miles in circumference and it is estimated that at this time there were some 1,000,000 people living there. The reason they come to that number is because what Jonah 4:11, the last verse of the book tells us, that there “**. . . are more than one hundred and twenty thousand person who cannot discern between their right hand and their left, and also much livestock?**”

Now as spectacular as this city was, as awesome as it looked, it was also an awful city! They were some of the cruelest and most sadistic people in history. We will deal more with that in a few minutes but just keep that in mind!

3. And again, listen to what God tells Jonah to do. “**Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.**” Jonah 1:2. A simple request but let’s put that into perspective for us today. It would be like saying, “*Joe, I want you to go to Syria and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.*” That is how bad it was and now listen to how Jonah responds to the Lord here!

VERSE 3

1. So as Jonah gets the call from God what does he do? He runs in the opposite direction. He runs down to the Mediterranean Sea to the port city of Joppa and catches a Phoenician boat to Tarshish, which is an area of Spain. That is some 2,500 miles west of Joppa, as far away from Nineveh as he could go.

2. Now as we read that we may be shocked. Here is this prophet of God who was instructed by God to go to Nineveh and he goes in the opposite direction. Why was he running away from God's will?

As we are going to see as we go through the book of Jonah he knew that God was gracious. He knew that God was merciful. You see, Jonah did not want to see the people of Nineveh live, he wanted them destroyed, he wanted God's judgment to fall upon them.

Now why was his heart so angry against the people of Nineveh? Jonah had good reason why he wanted them destroyed, The Assyrians were a brutal people. Nineveh was a notorious *“sanctuary of savagery.”*

Listen to what we are told in Nahum 3:1-4 of the Assyrians and their city, **“Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs. The noise of a whip And the noise of rattling wheels, Of galloping horses, Of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain, A great number of bodies, Countless corpses - They stumble over the corpses - Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, The mistress of sorceries, Who sells nations through her harlotries, And families through her sorceries.”**

Not a pretty picture and it gets worse. Consider what one Assyrian King did to his defeated foes, and keep in mind that this is only one man and some of the atrocities that he did. *“Three thousand captives I burned with fire . . . Their corpses I formed into pillars . . . Their governor I flayed, his skin I spread upon the wall of the city . . . From some I cut off their hands and their fingers and their noses . . . Of many I put out their eyes . . . I formed a pillar . . . of heads against the city gate, and 700 men I impaled on stakes.”*

And as I read this book I don't think that he was afraid of what the Assyrians were going to do to him but that God was going to be merciful and not destroy them. So yes, it was a tough assignment and you can see why Jonah didn't want to go there, he didn't want them saved from this judgment of God.

3. Now there is one more point here that I think is very important and that is the direction that Jonah is going when he is running away from God. And no I am not speaking about the direction that the boat was going in but the direction that Jonah was going in.

Listen again to what verse 3 says, **“But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”**

Did you notice that? Jonah went *DOWN* to Joppa and he went *DOWN* into the boat, not up. Now you may be thinking that is silly but it is not. You see, when you are not obeying the Lord you are not moving upward but you are going down and sometimes we have to sink so low before we will look up!

And here's the thing. When you are running from God, like Jonah, understand that Satan is more than willing to provide the transportation to get you there. And he will use a variety of vehicles. Such as a boat, a car, a plane, using men and women, alcohol, drugs, he will take you down that path away from God, he is more than willing! The only solution to that is found in James 4:7-8a, **“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. . . .”**

Jonah will eventually get to that place, but like I have said, he is going down, down, down before he looks up!

And listen carefully to what Spurgeon wrote and keep in mind, like I have said, the Devil is more than willing to provide that transportation to take you away from God. He wrote,

“Providence or no providence, the Word of the Lord is to be our guide, and we must not depart from it under pretext of necessity or circumstances. *It is very easy to make up a providence when you want to do so.* If you sit down and try to find in the ways of God to you an excuse for the wrong which you mean to commit, the crafty devil and your deceitful heart together will soon conjure up a plea for providence.”

VERSES 4-5

1. Let me set the stage for what is going on here and I think you will understand it a little more. So this ship sets sail and the, “The weather started getting rough, the tiny ship was tossed. If not for the courage the fearless crew, the ship would be lost, the ship would be lost” or something to that effect!

Yes the Jews were not known for their sailing ability but the Phoenicians were great sailors. They sailed the Mediterranean Sea many times but now this wind, this storm has them terrified. They are crying out to the many god’s they worshiped and they even tried to lighten the load to save the ship and their lives. But nothing seemed to help.

2. Now you would have to imagine that everyone on board that ship was trying to save that ship because in doing so they were saving their own lives. Well, that is not exactly correct. We are told, “**. . . But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.**” Jonah 1:5.

Did you see what Jonah did? He went *DOWN* to the *LOWEST* parts of the ship and then he *LAI D DOWN*! He is trying to get as far away from God as he can and I guess, humanly speaking and on this ship, this is as far as he could go!

Now don't get the idea that Jonah is resting in the Lord! That is not at all what he is doing. Remember, he is running from the Lord and I think the reason he could sleep is Jonah didn't care if he lived or died, one way or another he was not going to Nineveh!

Now think about this for a minute. The people of Nineveh needed to hear from God, the people on the boat needed to see the power of God, but God's servant is fast asleep, refusing to go, ignoring the need. We might not think much about that but listen to how Spurgeon puts this into perspective for us. He wrote,

Jonah was asleep amid all that confusion and noise; and, O Christian man, for you to be indifferent to all that is going on in such a world as this, for you to be negligent of God's work in such a time as this is just as strange. The devil alone is making noise enough to wake all the Jonah's if they only want to awake . . . All around us there is tumult and storm, yet some professing Christians are able, like Jonah, to go to sleep in the sides of the ship.

- C. H. Spurgeon

Think about that for a minute. What has God called you to do that you are ignoring? You see, God wants to touch people and He wants to use us. But many times we would rather see them destroyed than saved! Doubt that? Who is the person you don't want to see, the one that just irritates you, makes you angry, says mean things about you, does this and does that and you can't stand them and you don't want to be around them?

Maybe that is the one that the Lord wants you to go to and be a witness of Him. And I understand for Jonah that this was personal. His family, fellow Jews were brutalized by the Assyrians, carried away captive at times with hooks in their jaws. Thus, he wanted them destroyed rather than saved. And, obviously, that is not the heart of God. He desires restoration!

And as much as this was personal for Jonah the same is true in our own lives. It is always something that we allow to get in our way and prevent us from sharing and it is a personal issue, and there are many!

3. This storm that came upon Jonah's life was not to destroy Jonah but to get him back on track and to Nineveh. The same is true in our own lives. The storms that come are there for a reason. Thus, don't go down, don't move away from God but draw close to Him and obey what He is showing you, take those steps of faith. For Jonah, he is not ready yet and he is going to go down much farther before he looks up!

VERSE 6

1. The captain did all he could do in the physical sense to save the ship and nothing worked. He also applied the spiritual aspect as he had all on board pray to their gods to save them from this storm, and that too did not work.

Everyone was praying except one and that was Jonah! So he goes and finds Jonah fast asleep and said to him, **“What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.”**

Now when you think about what the captain was asking Jonah it is kind of funny. Jonah is running away from God and now the captain asks him to pray to this God and maybe they would be saved!

And for Jonah, how could he pray to God since he is rebelling against what God called him to do? But there is a solution for these men and as we read on we will see what they do to try and calm this storm and save them and their ship.

VERSES 7-8

1. We don't know how or why but these sailors felt this storm was not your normal storm but it was related to one of the gods who was angry at someone on board. Thus, in their minds they needed to find out who this person is so they can deal with this and this god can stop the storm before it destroys them!

So they are going to cast lots or we might say they are going to draw straws and whoever gets the shortest one is the loser or the one causing all this trouble. Keep in mind that Jonah wants to hide, he kind of wants to be in the witness protection program, he does not want anyone to know he is there, not even God!

But, **“the lot fell on Jonah.”** We would say, *“The jig is up”* or that the scoundrel has been found out! And it gets worse for Jonah who just wanted to hide away. We are told, **“Then they said to him, ‘Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’”** Jonah 1:8. They want to know all about him and why this has come upon them!

Talk about an open door to witness about the true and living God but there is a problem. He is on the run from this God and thus, how can he witness about Him? Well, he can share about himself and we will see that he will share that he fears God but I guess not enough to obey Him! He is in a predicament. Let’s see what he has to say!

VERSES 9-10

1. There is not much more Jonah could do except tell the truth at this point. God had exposed him and thus, Jonah tells them who he is. He tells them that he is a Hebrew, a God fearing man, the God who created the heavens and the earth. Again, that is interesting to me, for if he truly feared God why was he running from Him? And I guess we can ask ourselves that same question when we turn and run from God, the one we are supposed to fear!

But what I want you to see here is that his sin was exposed. He told them he fled from the Lord and like it or not, as numbers 32:23 tells us, **“... be sure your sin will find you out.”**

Jon Courson tells the following story and it does drive home the point. He wrote, Crew members of an English ship sailing around Cape Horn in the 1870s mutinied against their captain and shot him in the head before throwing him overboard, where his body landed on an ice shelf. Forty years later, off the coast of central Chile, an iceberg was spotted. To keep it from impeding the passage of sailing vessels in the area, a couple of men sailed out to blow it up, only to discover the frozen body of a man encased within. After chipping away the top layer of ice, the body was identified as that of Frank Shaw, a sea captain who had disappeared. Thus, the mutineers, who, for forty years thought they had gotten away with their crime, were hung on the gallows in London.

Be *sure* your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23). You never know what iceberg's going to float in!

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary Old Testament Volume 2, p. 813

How true that is and God does not want us to hide our sin because the more we hide it the more we get use to covering our sin and the more sin we will do. God loves us and thus, exposes our sin so we can repent and return to Him! As we are told, “**. . . be sure your sin will find you out.**”

2. Now as you read verse 10 it is truly a sad state of affairs. The reason I say that is that Jonah is rebuked by the unsaved sailors! He was living in rebellion against God and the people were wondering, “**Why have you done this?**”

That is a great question and there is no good answer as much as we might try to justify our sin! God will use the unsaved many times to get our attention, to get us back on track again.

Look at some of these televangelist's who have been exposed for their sin, not by fellow Christians who knew these things were going on, but by unbelievers. We see the television industry airing our dirty laundry and mocking our God.

And what about you? At work, does an unbeliever ever have to confront you for what you are doing, the jokes you are telling, maybe your behavior? It should not be so. If you claim to worship God then you need to obey Him! Our life needs to reflect our love for the Lord, we need to live what we say we believe, we need to ***OBEY the LORD!***

In regards to this issue, listen to what J. Vernon McGee wrote,

These men say to Jonah, "Why hast thou done this?" May I say to you, that is the good question that the unbeliever sometimes asks of the believer - and can be an embarrassing one.

When I was a pastor of a church in Los Angeles, an unsaved man who had visited the church came to see me. I had met him before in a business in downtown Los Angeles and had invited him to come to church. He said to me, "Is So-and-so a member of your church?" I said, "Yes, and he's an officer in the church."

He said, "I've known that man for several years, and I've done business with him. I never would have dreamed that he is a Christian. If I were a Christian, I would not do the things that man does." You know, it's embarrassing when an unbeliever says to a Christian, "Why are you doing this? I thought you were a child of God." I think Jonah must have turned three or four different shades of red at this particular time.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 747

Let me share a few verses to show you how we are to walk. In Romans 12:1-2 we are told, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”** In other words, every day we give our lives to the Lord as a sacrifice and allow Him to use us for His glory. He transforms us or the world will conform us into its image!

In James 1:22-25 we are told, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”** Talk is cheap. We need to live what we say we believe otherwise our words are empty!

And Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:1, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.”** No matter what situation you are in, no matter how unfair or difficult it may be, walk worthy of the calling that God has for your life. Live out your life in such a way that God gets the glory!

VERSES 11-12

1. Obviously these guys are concerned about their own lives and they want Jonah to tell them what to do to be saved from this storm! What again is sad is that he does not tell them more about the true and living God.

Now you may be thinking that this is not important when the ship is going down! Of course it is because one day all of us will die and are we prepared to meet our Maker? For Jonah, he is on the run from God and he is not going to go to Nineveh even if he has to die! At least that is what he is thinking at this point!

2. Here is something that we don't think about regarding our sin. Our sin, our rebellion affects those around us, those we say we love. Innocent people get tossed around in our storms as we see here with Jonah.

Now was God judging these men? No, I don't believe so. Then why did this come upon them? Because our sin will affect others as I have said. Look at alcoholism, it tears families apart, destroys lives and it doesn't only affect the one doing the drinking.

Divorce, it again destroys the family unit, something that God ordained, and children, parents, grandparents, friends can all be affected by this. And understand that our sin affects others, and it is against the Lord, giving the enemies of God an occasion to blaspheme the Lord!

That is important for us to remember, to have a correct perspective on how destructive sin is. Rebellion has a high price to pay and many times it is those we love that are also affected by what we do!

VERSES 13-16

1. Keep in mind that these sailors were not necessarily nice guys and yet look how they did not want to throw Jonah overboard. Now maybe you are thinking that if this was found out, throwing a passenger overboard, it would not look too good on their travel brochure for their cruise line!

No, that was not the reason. I think they understood that the God of the Jews was real, that He was active in the lives of His people and thus, to throw this prophet overboard could spell disaster for them. So they tried to move the ship towards shore. And they worked hard, they used their own effort and they got basically nowhere.

And then we read this word, “**Nevertheless . . .**” In other words, in spite all they did to try and save the ship, it was going down and their only option was to throw Jonah overboard! And prior to them doing this we are told what they said, “**. . . ‘We pray, O Lord, please do not let us perish for this man’s life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O Lord, have done as it pleased You.’**” Jonah 1:14.

You see, these sailors saw the power of God bringing about this storm and thus, they did not want to be held accountable for throwing this prophet of God overboard, to die in the sea, or so they thought that would happen. So they pray and then they threw Jonah into the sea. And as soon as he hit the water the sea was calm. The storm was over.

What was the result of that? Look again at Jonah 1:16, “**Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the Lord and took vows.**” This man Jonah, whose name means “dove,” which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit, is seeing a mighty work of God’s Spirit in the lives of these men on the boat. Not that Jonah was a great witness of God but God is gracious and merciful!

You see, their attitude changed as they saw the mighty hand of God. No longer did they mention the other god’s they were worshiping, but the **LORD** and they worshiped Him. It seems they got saved, not by the great preaching and love of Jonah, but by the love and power of God!

2. Now what happened to Jonah? Boy do I have a fish story for you! Let’s read on.

VERSE 17

1. Here is where many have a hard time and doubt the story of Jonah. They don't believe he could be swallowed by a fish and live. And for those who doubt it, I bet many of them also doubt the literal six days of creation.

You see, if you can believe Genesis 1:1, "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth**" the rest of the Bible is easy. If you doubt an all-powerful God who created the heavens and the earth then you will have a hard time with this and the other miracles that are in the Bible.

And like I have said, Jesus not only confirms to us that Jonah was a prophet, but also that he was 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the great fish as we read in Matthew. If you start picking out what you believe in the Bible and what you don't, you might as well toss the whole thing away for it is useless. Either God's Word is true or it isn't. You can't have it both ways. And I believe it is all truth, all of it, from Genesis through Revelation!

2. Now what about this great fish that swallowed Jonah, is that even possible. First of all we know that all things are possible with God. And this literally happened. Do we see evidence for this in the lives of other people? Let me give you two examples from history showing people who have survived after being swallowed by a fish. We are told,

In February, 1891, the whaling ship, Star of the East, was in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands when the lookout sighted a large sperm whale three miles away. Two boats were lowered and in short time, one of the harpooners was able to spear the creature. The second boat also attacked the whale, but was upset by a lash of its tail, causing the crew to fall into the sea. One of them drowned. But the other, James Bartley, simply disappeared without a trace.

After the whale was killed, the crew set to work with axes and spades to remove the blubber. They worked all day and into the night. The next day, they attached tackle to the stomach in order to hoist it to the deck. In so doing, the sailors were startled by something in the stomach which gave spasmodic signs of life. Inside was found the missing sailor, doubled up and unconscious. He was laid on the deck and treated to a bath of sea water which soon revived him.

At the end of the third week, he had entirely recovered from the shock and resumed his duties on the ship. Although his face, neck, and hands were bleached to a deadly whiteness and he took on the appearance of parchment, Bartley affirms that he probably would have lived inside his house of flesh until he starved, for he lost his senses through fright and not through lack of air.

- Jon Courson, Jon Courson's Application Commentary Old Testament Volume 2, p. 814

I bet that he has one of the best fish stories ever to be told! But here is one more for you. We are told,

Dr. Harry Rimmer, President of the Research Science Bureau of Los Angeles, writes of another case. "In the Literary Digest we noticed an account of an English sailor who was swallowed by a gigantic Rhinodon [shark] in the English Channel. Briefly, the account stated that in the attempt to harpoon one of these monstrous sharks, this sailor fell overboard, and before he could be picked up again, the shark turned and engulfed him.

Forty-eight hours after the accident occurred, the fish was sighted and slain. When the shark was opened by the sailors, they were amazed to find the man unconscious but alive! He was rushed to the hospital where he was found to be suffering from shock alone, and a few hours later was discharged as being physically fit. The account concluded by saying that the man was on exhibit in a London Museum at a shilling admittance fee being advertised as ‘The Jonah of the Twentieth Century.’”

In 1926 Dr. Rimmer met this man, and writes that his physical appearance was odd; his body was devoid of hair and patches of yellowish-brown color covered his entire skin.

- J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 752

So it is possible for this to happen. And the clincher for me is that God prepared this great fish for Jonah. You see, the question is, **“Is anything too hard for the LORD?”** Genesis 18:14. And the answer is, **“Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You.”** Jeremiah 32:17.

Now some say it was a sperm whale that swallowed Jonah or some other whale, but we are not sure. The one thing we are sure of is Jonah was swallowed by this great fish and spent 3 days and 3 nights down in its belly!

JONAH 2**VERSE 1**

1. Some don't make a big deal about this or they feel that Jonah's prayer began immediately when this great fish swallowed him up! I don't think so. Look at the last part of Jonah 1:17 which says, "**. . . And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.**" And notice what we read here in Jonah 2:1, "**Then Jonah prayed . . .**" I don't think he began to pray until he was in that great fish for three days and three nights!

That is amazing to me because if I am tossed in the ocean I am praying before I hit the water! Then what in the world took Jonah so long to pray? He needed to be broken. He wasn't ready to submit to the will of God for his life as hard as that is to believe!

And I think many times we respond to situations like Jonah. We wait until there is nothing else to do, and then we pray! And many times our prayers come as we are broken. Did God want this for Jonah? No! Did Jonah need this! Yes he did! He needed this in his life to get his attention and to get back into the will of God.

2. Here is one more point that I think is very important for us to not only understand but to apply to our lives. Jonah is going to quote from a variety of Psalms. That tells me he knew the Word of God, he had the head knowledge, he just refused to submit to what God was saying. We need to not only know the Word of God but then we must apply it to our lives.

You see, God desires our obedience. Remember what the prophet Samuel said to King Saul after he failed to utterly wipe out the Amalekites, like God had told him to do. And Saul tried to lie to Samuel, make all kinds of excuses and in I Samuel 15:22-24 we read, **“Then Samuel said: ‘Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he also has rejected you from being king.’ Then Saul said to Samuel, ‘I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.’”**

The Lord desires our obedience and may we not let our self-interests and other things get in our way and detract us from obeying Him! He not only knows what He is doing but He has our best interests in mind! Rebelling against Him is foolishness!

VERSES 2-6

1. I thought the sailors threw Jonah into the sea and yet it says here that it was the Lord that threw Jonah into the sea. How can that be? Because the Lord used these sailors to do His work. God prepared a great fish for Jonah to travel in and the pick-up place was in the sea! No matter how far Jonah tried to run from God, no matter how down, down, down he went, the Lord was there and the Lord was going to get Him redirected and He did!

Psalm 139:7-12 tells us that there is no place we can go and hide from God. We are told, **“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”**

Jonah found that out!

2. Now as I read over this I picture this whale or great fish going up and catching fish and Jonah, and then diving down into the depths of the sea. And there is Jonah, covered in seaweed, fish hitting him, and maybe a brief light as the fish opens his mouth. But like bars of a jail they quickly close. And if it was a mammal that swallowed Jonah it would be very hot inside, 98.6 degrees. And as they say, it is not the heat that will get you, it is the humidity! And in this fish, the humidity was very high!

VERSES 7-9

1. What we see here is the brokenness of Jonah and his repentance. And I think we can place ourselves right into this situation, for Jonah said, **“When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD . . .”**

Again, there was nothing else he could to, it is not like he could escape from this fish. His back was up against the stomach wall, you might say! It is as Proverbs 13:15 says, “**... the way of transgressors is hard.**” KJV. You see, you can’t fight against God and win, although we try at times. Thus, you can learn the lesson the easy way or the hard way. Jonah could have just gone to Nineveh but instead he was going to learn the lesson the hard way and still go to Nineveh.

Don’t get the idea that when God doesn’t allow us to do something that He is some kind of cosmic kill joy in our life. That he is ruining all our fun. In reality, it is the exact opposite.

God desires good for our life and He will try to prevent us from harm. He will warn us not to travel down that path. Then, it is up to us to either listen and obey or suffer the consequences of our foolish actions.

You see, we don’t know better than God does. God has established His ways for our own good, may we remember that. It is as David said in Psalm 31:19, “**Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!**”

And think about it like this. Who or what are you going to put your trust in? When you are running from God you are trusting in self - big mistake! If you trust in idols, the imagination of man’s heart - big mistake! Pieces of wood, stone, metal are not gods. They can’t see, hear, or do anything. In fact, they can be stolen, you have to pick them up to move them and yet people worship them. And as you put your trusts in these other things you are forsaking the love of God, the mercy of God that He has for you. Again, that is a big mistake. You see, by submitting your life to the Lord you will be in the will of God and you will receive the best for your life and we see that in verse 9.

The most important thing for us to understand is that, **“Salvation is of the LORD.”** And that is always the case! Remember the story of the rich young ruler. He was morally a good man and yet he knew he was missing something, eternal life.

So he came to Jesus and Jesus told him what he needed to do but he couldn't let go of those things and he left unchanged. And in Matthew 19:23-26 we are told, **“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’ Then His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ But Jesus looked at them and said to them, ‘With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”**

Yes, man cannot save himself, only God can reach down and lift man up and bring salvation into his life through Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way!

2. Now at this point Jonah has repented, he was broken which brought him back to the Lord. He is now surrendering his life back to the will of God. He is going to obey what the Lord has told him to do. He is going to be at that place that God wanted him to be when this all began! Where is he going? To Nineveh! Let's read on and see what happens.

VERSE 10

1. Let me say this. It just goes to show that you can't keep a good man down! Sorry about that one! Who did the Lord speak to here? He spoke to this great fish that swallowed Jonah and notice that this great fish obeyed the Lord, something that Jonah did not do!

And as the Lord gets Jonah to the place that He wants him to go, the great fish, “**vomited Jonah onto dry land.**” That is what we are told! Now as we read that we think that he vomited Jonah in Nineveh. But keep in mind that Nineveh is some 550 miles inland, some 550 miles from the Mediterranean Sea! Now that would be some projectile vomiting!

We are not told where Jonah was deposited but I think he was back in Joppa where he started! I think many times as we run from God He gets our attention and brings us back to the starting point.

Why? Because He wants us to take those steps of faith, to be obedient to His Word, and Jonah, as we will see next time, is going to find himself back where he started with the call of God upon His life to go to Nineveh! And he will have to take those steps of faith. God will not force him but Jonah knows what God wants of him, what he is to do!

Some powerful lessons for us to learn and apply to our lives. We need to not only listen to the Lord but then obey what He is telling us to do!

Jonah runs!

